

The Sam Bass Story

In historic Round Rock, a little over 100 years ago, one of the most notorious Texas outlaws met his end at the hands of the Texas Rangers. This is the tale of Sam Bass and the Great Round Rock Shootout.

The Road to Crime

Sam Bass came to Texas from Indiana in 1870 and worked for a while in a sheriff's office. He was industrious and in a few years he bought a "little sorrel mare," the fastest horse in Texas.

When the fame of his mare was such that no one would bet against him, Sam helped drive a herd of stolen cattle to Nebraska where he stayed for nearly a year. Sam used his ill-gotten money to buy a saloon but he was soon restless. On a whim, he sold the saloon and bought a gold mine that went broke almost immediately. He took up robbing stage coaches and fell in with some men with grander plans.

The Big Heist

On September 17, 1877, Sam and five others held up a train at Fort Bend, Nebraska. Every detail had been carefully planned; on board was \$60,000 in new twenty-dollar gold pieces fresh from the mint.

In disguise and \$10,000 richer, Sam headed straight for Texas on a wagon, audaciously giving a ride to some of the lawmen that were hunting him.

Back in Texas

Within weeks of the hold up, three of the bandits were dead and two others had disappeared. That left only Sam Bass against the skillful and tenacious Texas Rangers.

Sam returned to his adopted home of Denton, Texas boasting of a Black Hills gold strike to explain his sudden wealth. He spent lavishly on his friends and on those who helped him hide out in the woods, constantly eluding the law. From his base, near Dallas, Sam and his new gang began an unprecedented string of train robberies – four hold-ups in less than two months.

Round Rock

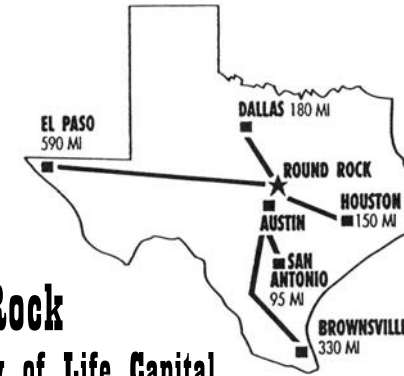
Sam spent his money so fast that, in spite of his success, he was nearly broke by July of 1878. He and three others, Jim Murphy, Frank Jackson and Seaborn Barnes, traveled to round Rock, intending to rob a bank. Unbeknownst to Sam, Jim Murphy had betrayed him to the Texas Rangers.

When the gang arrived in Round Rock, Major Jones and a company of Rangers were waiting. Jim Murphy stopped at a store on Chisholm Trail while the others went on to case the local bank.

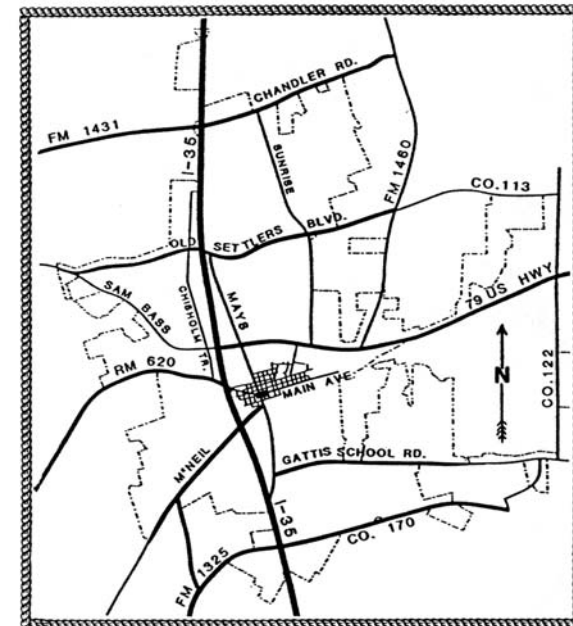
Here is the story of that fateful afternoon, Friday, July 19, 1878.



Purported photo of Jim "Judas" Murphy, Sam Bass and Seaborn Barnes (photo: Round Rock Leader)



Round Rock The Quality of Life Capital



For More Information, Contact the
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This project was funded in part through a Certified Local Government grant from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, as administered by the Texas Historical Commission. The contents and opinions, however, do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior.

WANTED



photo: Barker Texas History Center, The University of Texas at Austin

DEAD or ALIVE

Sam Bass

and the
Great Round Rock Shootout
of
July 19, 1878

Tourist Guide & Walking Tour

Walking Guide to the Great Round Rock Shootout

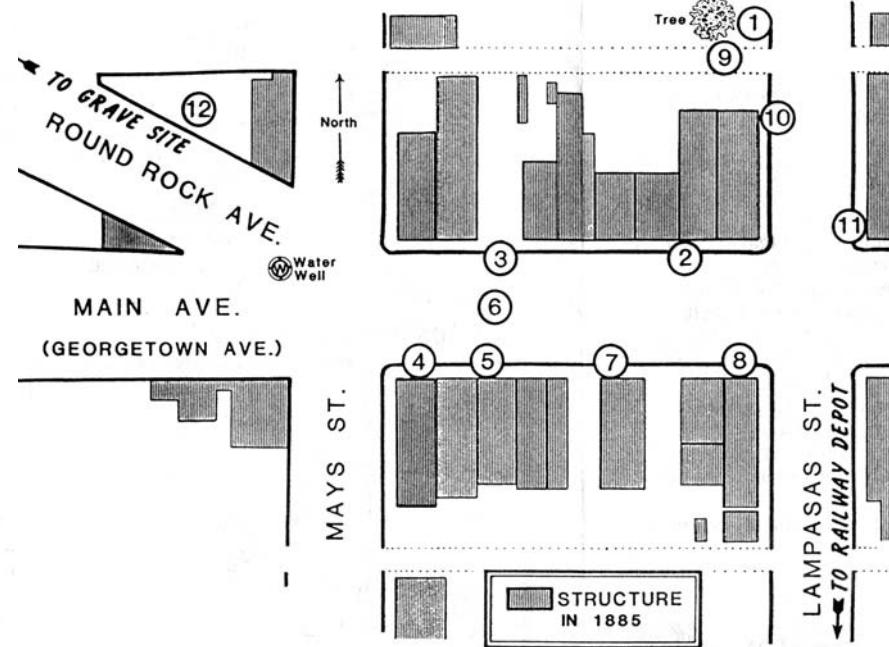
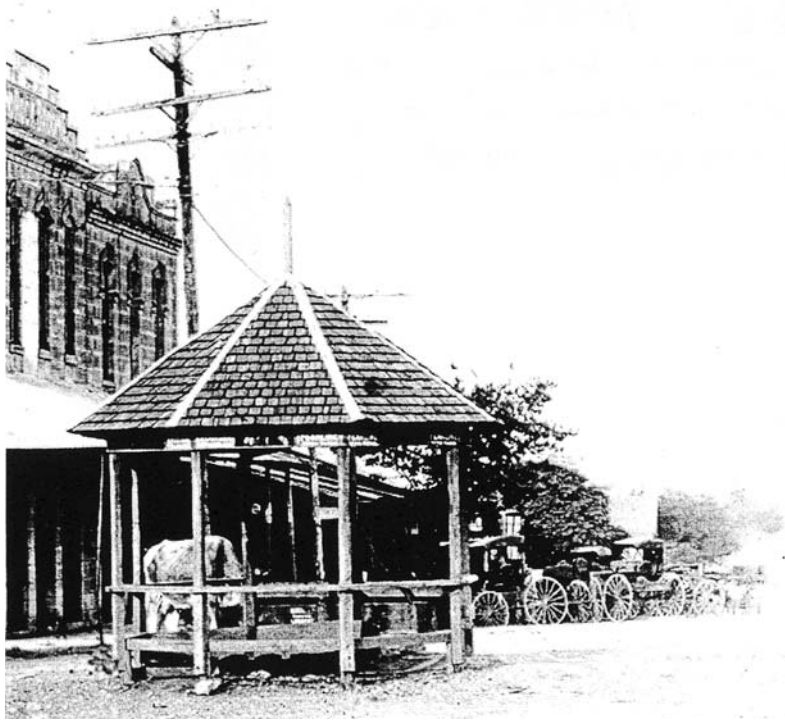


Photo courtesy of Earl Palmer

The Shootout

1 The three outlaws tie up their horses and walk to Kopperal's store (Plaque 4). None of the Texas Rangers waiting in the buildings recognize Sam Bass.

2 Deputy Sheriff Morris Moore, standing in front of Highsmith's Livery Stable, first observes the strangers and thinks that they are carrying guns.

3 Moore meets up with Deputy Sheriff Grimes and together they cross over to Kopperal's Store.

4 Moore remains outside while Grimes enters and confronts Bass and his gang, demanding to know if they are armed. The outlaws reply with gunfire, killing Grimes instantly.

5 As the gang flees from the store, Moore gives chase and is shot in the chest.

6 Texas Rangers and Round Rock citizens fire at the retreating bandits, wounding Bass in the hand.

7 Ranger Dick Ware, drawn by the gunfire, explodes out of the barber shop, his face still lathered, and fires at the fleeing desperados.

8 Major John B. Jones, commander of the Texas Rangers, returns from the railroad telegraph office and fired on the Bass gang; the outlaws return his fire, leaving bullets in the stone wall above his head.

9 Seaborn Barnes is shot in the head and killed by Ranger Dick Ware.

10 & 11 Rangers Dick Ware and George Harold fire on the gang. According to the official report, Harold inflicted the mortal wound on Bass, but other Rangers and Bass himself later claimed that Ware administered the fatal shot.

The Escape

Jackson helps the wounded Bass onto his horse and together they escape from the lawmen. After stopping by their camp, the two hunted bandits ride north up to Chisholm Trail. Bass soon realizes that he is unable to continue and convinces the ever-faithful Jackson to go on without him. Bass is left under a tree, where the Rangers discover him the following morning, and take him back to Round Rock for interrogation.

12 The next day, Sunday, July 21, 1878, Bass dies in a small wooden shack without betraying a single member of his gang. A Texas Historical Marker, commemorating the shootout, is located across the street from this shootout plaque.

13 Bass is interred in the round Rock Cemetery alongside Barnes' grave and the grave of his victim, Grimes. The graves of Bass, Barnes and Grimes can be seen today in the Round Rock cemetery, located

west of Interstate 35 on Sam Bass Road. Bass' and Barnes' graves are located at the northwest corner of the cemetery; Grimes' grave is at the northeast corner and features a Masonic emblem on the gravestone.

Other Points of Interest

South of Sam Bass Road is the *Old Town* historic district on *Chisholm Trail Road*. This area was the center of Round Rock until the railroad came through in 1876; the old Post Office and several historic homes can be found here.

The Round Rock that gives the town its name is located in Brushy Creek near the Chisholm Trail crossing.

Next to the *Round Rock Cemetery* is the *Slave Cemetery* – one of the few preserved slave cemeteries in Texas.

Produced by the City of Round Rock Planning Department